Memorials (TH)

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Community Affairs File

Historic Markers Here and There Remind of Vigo County's Record

TERRE HAUTE TRIBUNE SEP 28 1947

By A. R. Markle.

Another instance of man's desire to perpetuate his memory and the deeds he performed is in the erection of monuments following the close of wars in which he took part. Within a short few years after the conflict there breaks out a rash all over the nation of expensive soldiers and sailors monuments such as the one in the Circle at Indianapolis, or closer home in the court house yard here. Backed by a curious desire to honor or respect the dead, who have neither the desire or ability to appreciate the honor, the following generations pay the bills left by those who promote the affair, the public that is already paying for the waste of war, assumes still greater costs over long periods.

Vigo County's Monument.

This structure, erected at a cost of over $25,000, was financed by a bond issue of that amount and the added interest of the same amount added a like sum for the taxpayer, while the salary of the custodian adds a continuing cost of $250 a year. An incidental expense incured in the erection of an iron fence around it and the later removal were part of the load. Nearby, however, is a monument to Richard W. Thompson, remembered as "Colonel Dick," the cost of which was borne by his long associates and friends at the bar of the courts of the county. High above these in the dome of the courthouse hangs a monument, or memorial, to Colonel Francis Vigo, for whom the county was named. So pleased was the old patriot by being honored by the selection of his name for the new county in 1818, he left by his will the sum of $500 for a bell for the courthouse, and when the present building was erected in the middle '80s the money was used to pay part of the cost of the clock in the tower and a proper inscription was cast on the bell giving him credit for the donation.

The Stadium.

The present tendency in the erection of monuments is the so-called "living memorials" such as buildings and other institutions that serve some useful or recreational purpose. The first of these in Terre Haute was that known as the Memorial Stadium erected nominally in honor to those soldiers in the first World War. While not completely self-supporting and paid for out of taxes, it does serve a worth-while purpose in the recreational life of the community.

Parks as Memorials.

A number of our city parks are named in honor of some of the citizens whose lives were given largely to the betterment of the city and its people and some of these were named for the donors, others for those who advocated their creation. One of these, however, is named, not for the donor of land but for the man who then was mayor.

Memorial To a Pioneer.

Down in the New Hope cemetery on the road to the Dresser Power plant, stands a unique memorial to a pioneer citizen of Vigo county. John Sheets, who with his wife are buried there. Carved to represent a tall and broken tree trunk, it is surmounted by an eagle and bears on its surface, a stalk of corn with ears and leaves, a vine winds round the trunk, a snake climbs along the vine, two squirrels frisk all oblivious to the snake approaching them and a large tablet bears the inscription "John Sheets, died Jan. 5, 1881, aged 91 years, 11 days" and "Mary Sheets, his wife, died April 6, 1853, aged 61 years, 3 months, 6 days."

The statement accompanying his memory says that he served in the War of 1812 under Gen. W. H. Harrison and that he was also at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Further information is that the monument was "Erected in memory of John and Mary Sheets by H. W. and M. A. Sheets at the cost of $825.

Other Soldier Records.

In Pisgah cemetery near Sanford is a stone to the memory of William B. Rippetoe, in his early days a soldier in the war of 1812, who died in 1849 as a Methodist minister. Many other soldiers of that war of long ago are buried in the county, but a very few of them recite their military history. They lived through the war, helped settle Vigo county and found Terre Haute and died known only to their friends and families in later years.

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA
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Memorial Stadium

TERRE HAUTE FIRST NATIONAL BANK
GOLD CLUB "FIRST EDITION"
AUTUMN 1992

MEMORIAL STADIUM

Perhaps this fall sometime you will be sitting in Indiana State University's Memorial Stadium, taking in a football game or some other event on a sun-filled afternoon or maybe a crisp autumn evening. As you enjoy the succulent taste of hot-buttered popcorn or as you cling to the warmth of a cup of hot chocolate take a long, slow, full look at what you see around you. Just think back on days gone by in this Terre Haute headquarters for sports of all kind and other activities for nearly 70 years!

Dedicated to the memory of Vigo County's soldiers who lost their lives in recent wars, this landmark was built at a cost of $425,000. Memorial Stadium played host to its first event on Thanksgiving Day 1924 when Wiley and Garfield High Schools played to a scoreless tie in the Turkey Day football game. Approximately 12,000 fans swarmed through the gates to pay tribute to the new Memorial Stadium as well as to see the rival squads in action. The battle on the gridiron that day is long forgotten but the stadium continues to serve as a reminder of the fact that it became a reality in the life of Terre Haute - 68 years ago this November. For a long time prior an arena such as this had been the dream of sports followers of our town.

The stadium was built on the site of the old fairgrounds. The Four-Cornered Track was the horse-racing center in this section of the country back in the latter part of the 19th century. Hundreds of thousands of equestrian enthusiasts came out on horses and in carriages to see such favorites as Axtel, Nancy Hanks, and so many prominent race horses of the time. Imagine the dramatic change in eras from then to today as you travel to and from Memorial Stadium now!

The dedication of Terre Haute's new facility took place May 5, 1925 when 9,000 cheering baseball fans transformed the municipal stadium from

By Jeff Adams

a colossal horseshoe of concrete and steel into a living memorial to Vigo County's war heroes and a monument to a new era of sportsmanship in our community. The triumphal arch of the stadium, constructed of Bedford stone at a cost of $90,000, served as memorial proper for Vigo County's soldiers. It was originally draped by curved bleacher sections for 45 years, until 1970, when reconstruction left it to stand majestically alone.

The Three-I minor league baseball Phillies were furnished with an athletic field larger than that of any major league team except Yankee Stadium in New York. When opened for baseball play in 1925 Memorial Stadium was considered one of the finest minor league ballparks in the United States.

For the first time in many years business was at a standstill throughout our city during that spring afternoon. All of the schools were dismissed and every road in the area seemingly led to the stadium. Many dignitaries were there. The Commissioner of Baseball, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, hurled the ceremonial first pitch to Terre Haute mayor Ora Davis.

The local newspaper's Harry H. Hamby captured the atmosphere of the day. "No artist could paint such a picture as was presented when the huge bowl seemed practically filled with swaying colors of various hues. The dark clothes of the men contrasting with the bright and colorful attire of the women, decorated boxes, banners floating, Old Glory flapping in the breeze with now and then a burst of sunlight peeping out from the huge white clouds which drifted slowly by in the sky overhead."

Just picture this scene as you look north and east and gaze upon the walls that used to encircle the diamond.

Baseball wasn't the only event at the legendary site. The Shrine Circus used to perform at the stadium. Veteran sportscaster Bob Forbes can remember attending midget car races when he was a youngster. Names such as Ronnie Householder and Jimmy Snyder dotted the track scene in those years. "I can still remember they used hay bales", Forbes recounted. "And the castor oil. I never will forget the smell of that castor oil!" All sorts of activities were available at the corner of Brown and Wabash.

The "national pastime" left town for good in 1956 and Indiana State

University acquired Memorial Stadium from local governmental agencies on a 99-year lease in November 1966. I.S.U. President Alan C. Rankin stressed that the "memorial" aspect of the stadium would be retained. He stated that "we plan to preserve and refurbish the Memorial Arch to Memorial Stadium and as the Memorial Arch is now an integral part of the existing structure, the back part of the Arch will be refaced. We want to do everything we can to perpetuate the war memorial."

Installation of the world's first university-owned AstroTurf playing surface; removal of uncovered, deteriorating grandstands; and installation of a semi-permanent 4,500-seat bleacher section on the north side of the field were completed in time for the 1967 football season. Semi-permanent bleacher seating was increased to 7,500 in 1968.

Demolition work was begun in November 1969 to raze the old structure and replace it with a new 13,000-seating capacity unit. The new section replaced the original 5,500-seat curved section on the south side of the field. Bids on this construction project totalled $1,771,960. Completed in time for the 1970 football season this included locker, pressbox, concession, and restroom facilities.

The new section and 7,500-seat semi-permanent bleacher section provided the university and community with a 20,500-seat facility which fulfilled the stadium-size requirements in athletic conferences in which Indiana State would compete in years to come.

The stadium serves now as the site of I.S.U. football varsity and freshman games, I.S.U. soccer games, high school football games, youth football games, and a variety of events such as the statewide marching band contests. The surrounding golf course is also available for public use. The stadium even serves as storage of city park playground equipment, utilizing space under the grandstand during the winter months.

Memorial Stadium on East Wabash Avenue is indeed a tribute to Vigo County's defenders who lost their lives. It is that - and more. It is the melting pot, if you will - the friendly meeting place for citizens of Terre Haute and surrounding communities.

JAN.....

Many pictures of Memorial Stadium are available in the files at the Vigo County Public Library.

Also if you wish, I can come up with some out of Dorothy Clark's pictorial Wabash Valley history, if you need.

Please let me know if there is anything more I can do for you.

Thanks!!!!!!

Jeff

Memorials (W.V.)

T. H. Trib. 7/19/66

ISU Would Remodel Stadium to Provide 18,000 Seats for Football

Indiana State University President Dr. Alan C. Rankin told a fact-finding group Monday that ISU would co-operate in every way possible with the wishes of local officials concerning a proposal to transfer Memorial Stadium to the university, which needs a bigger home for its accelerated football program.

Various city and county officials had gathered to continue informal, exploratory talks looking toward the possible transfer. Those attending agreed to take the matter to members of the Vigo County Council and Board of Commissioners, the City Council, and the Park Board, to spur the study.

Dr. Rankin stressed the "memorial" aspect of the stadium would be retained if the transfer plan was approved.

The stadium was erected in 1924 as a memorial to Vigo County men who fought in World War I. He also said the golf course would continue to be available for public use.

"We want to do everything we can to perpetuate the war memorial portion," said Rankin. Members present at the meeting agreed the only notable opposition to the proposal came from persons concerned about the retention of the stadium as a memorial.

Storage Available

Don High, superintendent of parks who recently submitted his resignation, raised another issue when he said the Park Department might be deprived of storage and garage space if the stadium would be turned over to the university. However, Dr. Rankin, pointing out ISU would not be using the facility during the winter months, said an agreement might be reached so the city could continue to utilize the space under the grandstand for storage of play-

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ISU Program For Stadium

Continued From Page One.

ground equipment during the off season.

The ISU president said preliminary plans by the university call for demolition of the bleacher portions of the stadium, retaining only the grandstand portion. The football field would then be relocated, running in a northwest to southeast direction. ISU would then construct 12,000 bleacher seats in what is presently the outfield of the park, bringing seating capacity to between 17,000 and 18,000.

Baseball Would End

The stadium would then be purely a football facility, said Rankin, and could no longer be used for baseball. Also, the field could not be used for football games other than the university's since the football turf must be maintained in good condition. It was pointed out Vigo County's two new high schools will have their own football facilities, thus eliminating their need for the stadium.

Everett Branam Sr., president of the Vigo County Council, said the stadium will revert to the county, if the city decides to no longer maintain the facility. The county owns the land at the site while the city operates the stadium and golf course by contract with the county.

It would then be up to the county council, according to Branam, what would be done with the stadium. Dr. Rankin then offered to send a representative to the next county council meeting to answer any questions on the proposal and Branam accepted.

Favor Transfer

Malcolm Boone, president of the City Council, said he thought a majority of council members would be in favor of the transfer, especially since it would probably take a bond issue of more than $150,000 to repair the stadium.

W. L. White and Sid Levin, both members of the Park board, spoke in favor of the proposal, as did Raymond Thomas, city controller, who spoke for the administration. Harry Brentlinger, president of the Board of County Commissioners, said he thought the commissioners would favor the plan.

Branam would not speak for the county council, saying they would have to meet on the proposal. The council's next meeting is Wednesday and Branam said the subject will be brought up then.

Brentlinger said it would be to the county taxpayers' advantage to favor the project, since the stadium would be repaired and made available to the public. Agreement was expressed by J. Kenneth Moulton, ISU vice president and treasurer, who said the university looked upon the venture as an investment from which it expected to get its money back.

"This would be a major step toward bringing big time football to Terre Haute," said Moulton, who indicated the lack of an adequate facility was one of ISU's biggest headaches.

The participants agreed a list of ushers of the stadium over the past several years should be drawn up so that an idea of public usage could be obtained.

The meeting was called by White after a similar meeting June 27. Also in attendance at the meeting was John Watson, as superintendent of parks.

Memorial Stadium also: Historic Landmarks (W. V.)

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STADIUM NEARING COMPLETION NOW

Contractors Working On Finishing Touches—Complete Within Next Sixty Days.

With the new municipal stadium at Stadium park on East Wabash avenue rapidly nearing completion, an excellent idea can be gained of the immensity of the structure which will next year furnish the Terre Haute Three-I league baseball team with an athletic field which will be larger than the field of any of the big league teams in either circuit with the exception of the Yankee stadium in New York.

With a total length from northeast to southwest of 600 feet, and a total width at the widest part of 375 feet, the old Three-I league park, which in itself was not by any means small, will have faded into the background, and will seem a pigmy in comparison. Yet at this, the foul lines are so constructed on the new field that a fair ball may be hit into the last section of the bleachers on either side, and Terre Haute may rival New York in the developing of a Babe Ruth, with his grandstand home runs.

The triumphal arch of the new stadium, which constitutes the memorial proper, and which represents an outlay of more than $90,000, is practically complete, and within two more weeks the last stone will have been placed. The pouring of the seats is complete, as is also all of the concrete work with the exception of a few small jobs such as the completion of the front railing which borders the playing field, and the rear railing at the outside of the east sections. The ten-foot wall which will connect the two ends of the bleachers is also yet to be poured, but this is a comparatively small job.

All the structural steel work for the roof is complete, and the placing of the gypsum board and the pouring of the four inches of gypsum on top of this is 80 per cent complete. After this, there will be a roofing of five-ply asphalt on top, and the roof will be complete.

The main sewer line which runs around the inside of the arena and operates to drain the roof and also the playing field is under construction at this time, and the entire athletic field is being worked over.

Nine thousand grandstand seats, as well as 1,200 movable box seats, are on the ground, in addition to the material for the bleacher seats. Brackets for the placing of these seats were set during the week.

The press stand will be on the topmost peak of the roof, where a bird's-eye view of the entire playing field will be obtainable. It will be reached by a special stairway which is being constructed for this purpose.

George Stoner, of the Shourds-Stoner company, architects in charge, said that another two months would see the structure practically complete, and that there would be plenty of time to prepare for the big time on Thanksgiving day, when Wiley and Garfield will meet in their annual football tussle before what is expected to be the largest crowd which ever gathered in Terre Haute to see an athletic contest.

Terre Haute Stadium
see also: Historic Landmarks (W.V.)

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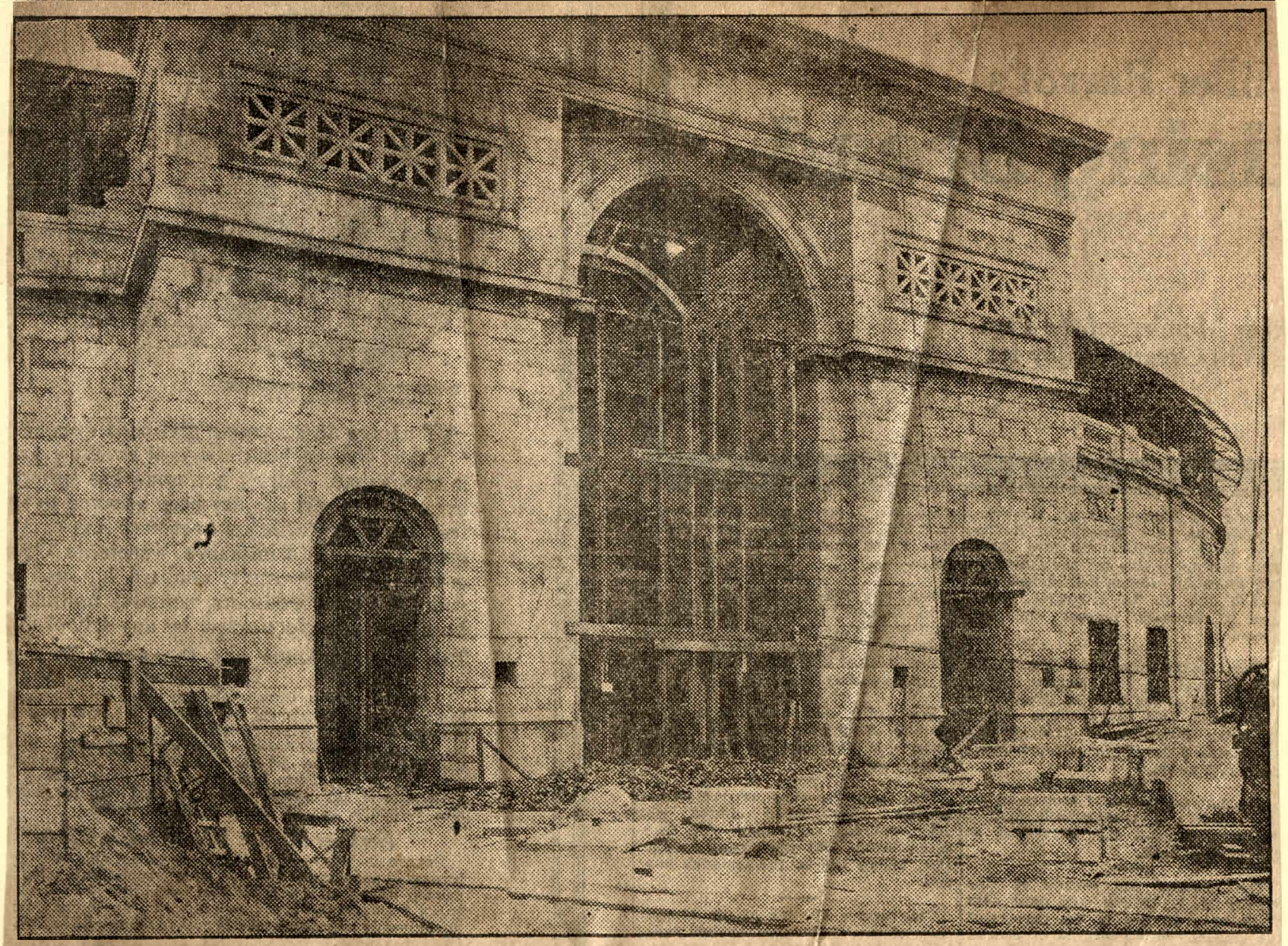
MEMORIAL STADIUM

Memorials (TH)

...UMPHAL ARCH OF MEMORIAL STADIUM UNDER CONSTRUC...



HE MEMORIAL PROPER FOR VIGO COUNTY'S SOLDIERS: THE ENTRANCE ARCH OF THE NEW STADIUM, CONSTRUCTED OF BEDFORD STONE AT A COST OF $90,000. THE STADIUM ITSELF WILL BE COMPLETE IN TIME FOR THE WILEY-GARFIELD FOOTBALL GAME ON THANKSGIVING DAY.

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